



Task Force Studies Workforce Planning

Ponder this...

- ✓ How can state government's HR role better support the state's mission and core services?
- ✓ Are we prepared for the looming wave of retirements, coupled with a demographic shift *and* an expected shortage of skilled labor?
- ✓ What steps can state government take to "look like Montana"?
- ✓ And what exactly does the goal of "becoming an employer of choice" entail?

That's a sampling of issues facing a task force of high-level policymakers appointed by Department of Administration Director, Janet Kelly. By year's end, the task force will design an initiative for developing our executive-branch workforce – a blueprint for competitive "people management" that better aligns recruitment, training, and career development with the missions of our agencies.

The *State Workforce Planning Task Force* consists of agency directors, deputy directors, and division administrators. They're charged with tackling difficult HR issues facing agencies under Title 2, Chapter 18, MCA.

Originally formed as an ad hoc *Special Task Force on Pay* in 2005, this group helped build and refine the broadband pay plan and improve the state's biennial salary survey. Building on its success, Director Kelly appointed a permanent task force to examine broader employment issues facing state government.

The *State Workforce Planning Task Force* meets monthly. Meetings are open to the public. To learn more, you can visit its Web site: <http://hr.mt.gov/hrpp/docs/StateWorkforcePlanningTaskForce/2010stateworkforceplanningforce.mcp.x> or contact Paula Stoll, Peggy Davis, or Bonnie Shoemaker at the State Human Resources Division.

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Managing Your HR Budget in Tight Times

Your staff is the most important resource in achieving your agency's mission, so managing your budget in the face of cutbacks calls for shrewd investment in human resources. And that likely means breaking with tradition.

Traditionally, we've reacted to shrinking budgets by cutting discretionary spending. Certainly, smart management means making smart choices about spending. Training looks like a low-hanging fruit of discretionary spending.

For current and new employees, training is a key investment. The return on investment boosts productivity and morale, even when budgets are tight.



Getting the best return on your training investment requires two smart moves:

- 1) Making sure you clearly identify training needs. What sometimes looks like a training need may actually be a need for improved communication, planning, or feedback. Save your training dollars for real training needs.
- 2) Taking advantage of cost-saving opportunities. For example, the Professional Development Center offers a 10% discount for two to four employees from your agency attending a workshop. For five or more employees, the discount is 20%. If you have eight or more people in need of identified training, you can save even more by having the PDC tailor a course for in-house delivery.

While it's easy to cut training when the budget shrinks, the short-term savings can have a long-term cost. Keeping the "people factor" in the forefront can help maintain a productive, motivated staff.

Liar, Liar, Pants on Fire

According to the Society for Human Resource Management, 53% of applicants lie on their resumes. Moreover, ADP Screening and Selection Services reported in 2.6 million background checks:

- 44% of applicants lied about their work histories,
- 41% lied about their education, and
- 23% falsified credentials or licenses.

With the job market becoming more competitive, these statistics still hold true. In difficult times, applicants may be lying on their resumes as much as ever.

On-line hacks have created a market to help applicants falsify information to land a job. We checked out a few sites, and documented these promises.

Fakeresume.com claims they can teach you:

- how to get fake references
- how to get college transcripts from ANY University with the GPA you want
- how to forge college transcripts easily
- why to lie on your resume but NOT on a job application (It's a legal reason.)

Careerexcuse.com takes it a step further and offers the following services:

- You Choose Your Career History!
- You Choose Your Salary!
- We Provide a Real Company Just for You!
- We Provide a Real Website For That Company!
- We Provide a Real "800" Phone Number!



- We Will Have our Operators Standing By! (to give phone references)
- We Will E-mail You Every Time Someone Calls!

The justification for such deception? Fakesumes.com states, “Hiring Managers Think You're Lying Anyway! Yep, that's right, the majority of human resources managers assume that EVERYONE embellishes, exaggerates, puffs up, and basically lies to some extent on your resume. So if you're being totally honest, you're being penalized because they're going to assume that you embellished your resume to a certain extent!” These services are a wake-up call to stay on your toes and give references more than just a quick once-over.

So, what is a manager to do? SHRM advises employers to compare what people say with what their resumes and applications say. Then, ask pointed questions about the job or their experience to make it harder for an applicant to lie. Ask a candidate to describe a work experience as it relates to a specific skill you are trying to evaluate. Take extensive notes. Follow up on inconsistencies or contradictions and probe for details. Ask the candidate for contact names during the interview to verify the information.

HR Hero recommends employers take these steps to ensure references are valid:

- **Look up the company's website yourself.** Obviously, CareerExcuse.com is providing a fake website. Call the telephone number on the website. If you're greeted by a fishy-sounding computerized system, select a different entry and ask for HR.
- **Insist on talking to a real person.** CareerExcuse.com makes it clear they want to avoid live conversations with HR professionals and prefers to produce the written questionnaire responses.
- **Create a paper trail by using e-mail.**
- **Ask the company if it's incorporated.** If they don't or can't answer, that's a red flag. If they do answer, check the secretary of state's corporation database to verify. Each state has a different one.
- **Amend your policies and application forms** to make it clear that falsifying a resume or references is grounds for immediate dismissal.

As job seekers become more desperate, it's not surprising that some people will turn to unscrupulous tactics to find employment. Take extra steps to check information to help you keep from getting burned by someone whose “pants are on fire.”



How Can You Help Cut Costs?

Suppress your advice. No, we don't mean button your lip. Just turn off printing your pay advice — your “check stub” — that you've been getting every other week.

The state could eliminate printing over 312,000 pieces of paper a year if every employee, enrolled in direct deposit, turned off printing his or her pay advice. This is an annual savings of over \$56,000! In addition, agencies could redirect staff time. Instead of sorting and distributing pay warrants and advices, staff could devote more time to strategic initiatives such as workforce planning and talent management.

It's easy. Just log into the *MINE* and select the Employee Self-Service tab on the left of the screen. Click on [Payroll and Compensation](#) > [Direct Deposit](#) > [Pay Statement Print Option](#). **Uncheck** the [box](#) to suppress printing the pay advice. Save the change and you are finished.



Remember, you can always view and print a pay advice online: [Employee Self-Service](#) > [Payroll and Compensation](#) > [View Paycheck](#). Thanks for doing your part!

Flagrant Falsifier Stays Fired

The Montana Supreme Court recently sustained the discharge of a state employee for falsifying time records. The Court's opinion favorably cited the language of the state's *Discipline Policy* and *Discipline Handling Guide*.

For five years as an attorney with the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Keith Christie "struggled" with properly reporting his work hours. In the spring of 2007, Christie's boss documented big differences between the hours Christie claimed and the hours he worked. When confronted with the discrepancies, Christie gave feeble explanations. DEQ discharged him for falsely reporting his time as a "manifestation of dishonesty and ... theft of state resources."

At a grievance hearing, Christie said DEQ failed to consider his good performance. The hearing examiner concluded that Christie had "exaggerated" his work hours but didn't enter a finding on whether the actions were intentional. The hearing examiner said DEQ lacked just cause to fire Christie.

The Director of DEQ, Richard Oppen, reviewed the findings and concluded that Christie had intentionally falsified his time records. Oppen noted that the *Discipline Handling Guide* supports discharge for serious offenses such as falsification of records. Oppen sustained Christie's discharge.

Christie filed in district court for judicial review, arguing that Oppen had improperly substituted his judgment for that of the hearing examiner. He also argued that Oppen had failed to apply the state's progressive discipline policy. DEQ responded that Oppen hadn't substituted his judgment; he'd made a key finding that the hearing examiner failed to make – that Christie intentionally falsified his record. District court affirmed DEQ's decision, saying Christie engaged in "a pattern of deception that no employer, public or private, is required to endure."

Christie appealed to the Montana Supreme Court, saying there was inconsistent evidence about his intent. DEQ should have considered his total work record and applied progressive discipline. The Supreme Court disagreed. At issue, even in Christie's own words, was the "question of honesty." But it was a question that the hearing examiner left unanswered. "Because the hearing examiner failed to address the basis for Christie's discharge, that task fell to Director Oppen." Further, the Court said, "Substantial evidence exists in the record that Christie persistently and intentionally falsified his time records ..."

The Court also found Christie's argument about his good performance "without merit." "As set forth in the state's *Discipline Handling Guide*," said the Court, "certain serious infractions do not require consideration of an employee's overall service record prior to termination." In addition, the state's discipline policy gives management the discretion to consider progressive discipline "on a case-by-case basis."

Supreme Court: *Christie v. Department of Environmental Quality*, 353 Mont. 227, __ P.3d __ (2009)